

# **IOWA BIRD LIFE**



**Vol. 54 No. 3**

**September 1984**

Published by the

**IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION**

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The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized at Ames, Iowa, February 28, 1923, for the study and protection of native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students.

The central design of the Union's official seal is the American Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

Publication of the Union: Mimeographed letters, 1923-1928; THE BULLETIN 1929-1930; IOWA BIRD LIFE beginning 1931.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATE:** \$12.00 a year on a calendar year basis, single copies \$3.00. Subscription to the magazine is included in all paid memberships, of which there are six classes as follows: Life Member, \$250.00, payable in four equal installments; Supporting Member, \$15.00 a year; Family Member, \$15.00 a year; Regular Member, \$12.00 a year; Junior Member (under 16 years of age), \$6.00 a year.

## EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE

235 McCLELLAN BLVD.

DAVENPORT, IOWA 52803

IOWA BIRD LIFE (ISSN 0021-0455) is published quarterly for \$12.00 per year, single copies \$3.00 by Ornithologists' Union, 235 McClelland Blvd., Davenport, Iowa 52803. Second-class postage paid at Davenport, Iowa. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, 235 McClelland Blvd., Davenport, Iowa 52803.

# Identification of Winter Sparrows 59

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## Introduction

A substantial number of researchers utilize ornithological data gathered during organized bird counts. Christmas bird counts, for example, generate a significant amount of information on the status of most North American bird species. Recently, Iowa has become involved in a winter bird feeder survey organized by Rick Hollis. This survey has the potential for greatly increasing our knowledge of the wintering Iowa passerines, particularly sparrows. Because organized counts such as those described above rely heavily on the contributions made by amateur ornithologists, and because many contributors have expressed varying degrees of frustration concerning the identification of sparrows, it is the purpose of this article to discuss the technique of identifying the wintering sparrows of Iowa. A brief review of some of the field guides presently available to bird watchers will also be given. Names of all species discussed conform to the **American Ornithologists' Union Check-list** (American Ornithologists' Union, 1982).

## Technique of Sparrow Identification

The technique of field/feeder identification of sparrows can easily be broken down into five basic categories: a) plumage; b) song; c) call notes; d) behavior and flight pattern; and e) habitat. The first and most important field mark is the bird's plumage. The observer should learn to quickly examine the various parts of a bird's plumage and verbally describe the color patterns (including streaking, spotting or absence thereof) which are present. Announcing the field characteristics out loud helps to remember them when a field guide is consulted. For sparrows, it is best to first note the general overall color of the bird. Next, the head and breast markings should be examined. One should note the color of the crown or cap and, when present, the colors of the eye stripe (the line of plumage which goes over the eye, eye line (the line of plumage which appears to go through the eye) and eye ring. Generally, sparrows are either streaked or unstreaked on the breast. Of importance, however, is the presence or absence of a central stickpin or breast spot. Wing markings are also helpful in identification and should be examined for the presence or absence of wing bars. The length, shape (rounded versus notched), and color of the tail, the color of the legs and feet, and the color of the bill, although many times overlooked, are often crucial to the identification of a the spring thaws.

Songs of most sparrows are diagnostic and readily recognized. Unfortunately, singing is greatly reduced in the winter months. Nevertheless, many sparrows will sing, sometimes frequently, on bright, sunny, warm days during mid-winter and the spring thaw.

Although call notes are not as distinguishable as songs, some sparrows have readily identifiable call notes. Call notes consist of alarm notes, most often given when a predator or human is nearby, and/or "chips" which are part of the species' normal communicative repertoire. With practice, the notes and chips of many of the more common Iowa sparrows can be easily recognized in the field.

The behavior of a sparrow often gives a clue to its identity. Field marks to look for in this category include how tame or shy the bird is, how it feeds, whether it prefers to walk or fly when disturbed by the observer, whether it is solitary or tends to occur in loose or large flocks, and flight pattern. The flight pattern can be strong and direct like a Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), weak and fluttering like a Le Conte's Sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*), or undulating like a goldfinch.



Aside from bird feeders (where almost any species can be found), sparrows are very consistent in their choice of habitats. Open country and grassland sparrows, for example, tend to shy away from wooded areas and fence lines. The habitats most often encountered in Iowa include: open country/grassland, early successional fields and shrubby areas, deciduous wood lots and forested areas, coniferous wood lots, marsh, and fence lines and hedgerows.

#### Field Guides

The identifying field marks given for the species presented below were derived from four commonly used field guides and the author's own field experience. On overall merits, *Birds of North America* (Robbins, et. al., 1983) is probably the most useful field guide. All species are represented by an artist's illustrations, and a plate showing the head markings of most North American sparrows is unique to this guide.

National Geographic Society's *Birds of North America* (Scott, et. al., 1983) is useful in that it emphasizes seasonal and geographic plumage variations found in many of the species. Both this guide and *A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies* (Peterson, 1980) utilize artists' drawings and illustrations to represent all species. In addition, the latter field guide employs the "Peterson System" — the technique of using small arrows to point out the key field marks.

The Audubon Society *Master Guide to Birding*, Volume 3 (Farrand, 1983) combines color photographs and artists' drawings to illustrate the various species. A modified "Peterson System" of identification is used on small black and white reproductions of the color photographs. A brief list of key field marks for all species and a glossary of terms are unique to this guide. All of the field guides except *A Field Guide to the Birds* (Peterson, 1980) cover all North American species and have range maps and species illustrations on opposing pages. Peterson (1980) describes only those birds east of the 100th meridian and places all of his range maps in an appendix.

#### Species Summaries: Wintering Iowa Sparrows

Thus far, I have used the word "sparrows" to include all of the finches and finch-like birds normally seen in Iowa during the winter. A list of these species is given in Table 1. Although I will concentrate on the identification of the true sparrows (Subfamily *Emberizinae*), I will comment briefly on the finches (Family *Fringillidae*) and the House Sparrow (Family *Passeridae*). The reader should note that the Snow Bunting (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) and longspurs (*Calcarius*), which are species not normally encountered at feeders, are omitted from the list in Table 1. The Snow Bunting and Lapland Longspur (*C. lapponicus*) are regular winter residents, however, and should not be ignored when identifying sparrow-like birds.

Probably the most consistent field mark for all sparrows and finches is the bill, which invariably is conical in shape. When examining winter "sparrows", it is important to remember that the presence of bright red or yellow color patterns usually indicates the bird is a member of the true finches (Family *Fringillidae*). Yellow is the predominant color on the American Goldfinch and Evening Grosbeak. The goldfinch can be told by its olive-brown back, yellowish wash on the head and neck, black wings with buff-white wing bars, and undulating flight. The Evening Grosbeak, which has black wings with conspicuous white wing patches and a black tail, is one of the largest of the finches. The bill is huge and whitish and, while the male's body plumage is mostly yellow, the female has yellow confined to the nape of the neck and the sides.

The Pine Siskin, a common bird at feeders during invasion years, is heavily streaked with brown on the underparts and has patches of yellow at the base of the flight feathers and along the sides of the tail at the base. The bill is thinner and less conical than in most finches.

Crossbills are always identified by their crossed mandibles. Wings and tails of

Table 1. Wintering sparrows and finches of Iowa.

Family <b>Emberizidae</b>
Subfamily <b>Cardinalinae</b>
Northern Cardinal ( <i>Cardinalis cardinalis</i> )
Subfamily <b>Emberizinae</b>
Rufous-sided Towhee ( <i>Pipilo erythrophthalmus</i> )
American Tree Sparrow ( <i>Spizella arborea</i> )
Chipping Sparrow ( <i>Spizella passerina</i> )
Field Sparrow ( <i>Spizella pusilla</i> )
Vesper Sparrow ( <i>Poocetes gramineus</i> )
Savannah Sparrow ( <i>Passerculus sandwichensis</i> )
Fox Sparrow ( <i>Passerella iliaca</i> )
Song Sparrow ( <i>Melospiza melodia</i> )
Lincoln's Sparrow ( <i>Melospiza lincolni</i> )
Swamp Sparrow ( <i>Melospiza georgiana</i> )
White-throated Sparrow ( <i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i> )
White-crowned Sparrow ( <i>Zonotrichia leucophrys</i> )
Harris' Sparrow ( <i>Zonotrichia querula</i> )
Dark-eyed Junco ( <i>Junco hyemalis</i> )
Family <b>Passeridae</b>
House Sparrow ( <i>Passer domesticus</i> )
Family <b>Fringillidae</b>
Pine Grosbeak ( <i>Pinicola enucleator</i> )
Purple Finch ( <i>Carpodacus purpureus</i> )
Red Crossbill ( <i>Loxia curvirostra</i> )
White-winged Crossbill ( <i>Loxia leucoptera</i> )
Common Redpoll ( <i>Carduelis flammea</i> )
Pine Siskin ( <i>Carduelis pinus</i> )
American Goldfinch ( <i>Carduelis tristis</i> )
Evening Grosbeak ( <i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i> )

both species are dark. The Red Crossbill has no wing bars and, while red is the dominant body color on the male, the female is characterized by a yellowish-olive color. Two prominent white wing bars are diagnostic features of the White-winged Crossbill. The male is reddish to pink (reddish-yellow in immatures), and the female is usually a grayish-olive color.

The presence of a red cap and black chin identifies both redpoll species. While the Common Redpoll usually is grayish-brown on the back with streaking on the rump, sides and undertail coverts, the Hoary Redpoll (*Carduelis hornemanni*) is generally much paler, with streaking on the sides very much reduced; and a white, unstreaked rump and undertail coverts. The bill of the Hoary is shorter and stouter. The Hoary Redpoll is accidental in Iowa (Dinsmore, et. al., 1984) and all sight records should be thoroughly documented.

The male Purple Finch is suffused with red on the head, throat, breast and back. It also has a thick, conical bill and a white, unstreaked belly. The female is heavily streaked with brown on the undersides and has a dark brown jaw stripe or whisker, and a broad, white eye line. (Be alert for House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) which are moving in from the east (Kent 1982). Males are more red-orange than purple, with color restricted to the head and throat while females are not as boldly streaked and have an indistinct eye line. ed.).

The uncommon Pine Grosbeak is by far the largest winter finch. The male, which is pinkish-red with two white wing bars on dark wings, resembles the smaller White-winged Crossbill. The female is predominantly gray with a yellowish-olive color on the head and rump and two white wing bars. This species is seldom seen in southern Iowa.



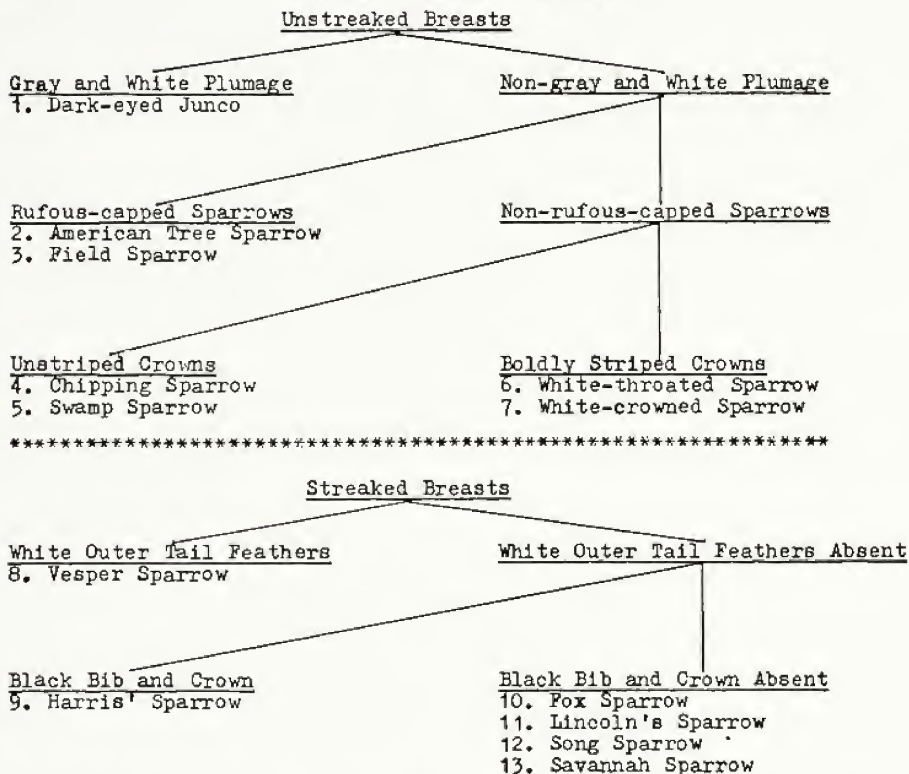


Figure 1. Wintering Iowa sparrows grouped according to diagnostic plumage features.

The true sparrows (Subfamily *Emberizinae*) are characterized by a predominantly brownish plumage with streaking on the back and (in some species) the breast and/or belly. Figure 1 shows the various sparrows categorized according to diagnostic features of their plumages. The presence or absence of streaked underparts is one of the first things an observer should look for when identifying sparrows. I will discuss each species according to the numerical sequence indicated in Figure 1. Information on status, winter distribution and habitat preference is adapted from Dinsmore, et. al. (1984).

1. **Dark-eyed Junco.** Of all the sparrows, this species is unique in having an overall gray and white plumage. The gray hood, back and upper breast, pinkish bill, white belly and white outer tail features are diagnostic features of this species. Found throughout the state, the junco is partial to brushy and weedy fields, woodland edge, hedgerows and road sides. It is also a common bird at feeders preferring to feed on the ground below the feeder.

2. **American Tree Sparrow.** This species and the Field Sparrow are the only two "unstreaked" sparrows with a rufous cap during the winter. Both species also have a gray eye stripe and a rufous eye line. The Tree Sparrow is best told by the dark stickpin or breast spot on an otherwise pale gray breast, and the two-toned bill (dark upper mandible and yellowish lower mandible). Two white wing bars and thin white edgings to the dark outer tail feathers are also good field marks. This species prefers brushy and weedy fields, grasslands, and woodland edge throughout the state. It can be relatively common at feeders when heavy snow cover exists.

3. **Field Sparrow.** As noted above, the Field Sparrow has a rufous cap and eye line, and a gray eye stripe. It is best recognized, however, by its pinkish bill, white eye ring and pale gray underparts which lack a central stickpin. This species also has two white wing bars and pinkish legs. The Field Sparrow is rare in Iowa during the winter, and is usually seen in the southern half of the state. It can be found in brushy and weedy fields, woodland edge and occasionally at feeders. (It should be looked for in flocks of American Tree Sparrows. ed).

4. **Chipping Sparrow.** One of the most difficult-to-identify winter sparrows, the Chipping Sparrow is rare in Iowa during the winter and has never been recorded in January or February (Dinsmore, et. al., 1984). The solid rufous cap and white eye stripe, which are present during the breeding season, are absent in the winter. The following are good field marks for winter Chipping Sparrows: dark brown to chestnut crown with dark streakings; pale, pinkish bill; dark eye line and buff-colored eye stripe; brown cheek patch; gray rump; and buffy-gray underparts which lack a central stickpin.

5. **Swamp Sparrow.** The primary feature of this species is the extensive rufous coloring in the wings. The crown is dark brown (sometimes with dark streaks) and usually has a pale or gray central stripe. A wide gray breast band is offset by an unspotted white throat and belly. The sides are grayish-brown, the eye stripe is gray, the eye line is dark or dusky-colored, and the tail is rounded. Although the breast is usually unmarked, some individuals are finely streaked and may exhibit a central breast spot. Usually seen in southeast Iowa during the winter, this species is partial to wet, marshy areas with tall grass and weedy and brushy fields.

6. **White-throated Sparrow.** The white throat, yellow lores (area between the bill and the eye), and striped crown are the diagnostic features of this species. Because it is polymorphic, some birds have black and white head stripes while others have tan and dark brown head stripes. The dark bill, dark eye line, gray cheeks, and pale gray underparts are other important field marks. Immatures, in which most of these features are less pronounced, are told from the similar Swamp Sparrow by the notched tail and head pattern. Some immatures are finely streaked on the breast and may exhibit a faint central breast spot. Rare in Iowa during the winter, the White-throated Sparrow frequents woodland thickets, brush piles, woodland edge, brushy areas and bird feeders, usually in the southeast.

7. **White-crowned Sparrow.** The pinkish bill identifies this bird in all plumages. Adults have a black-and-white striped crown which lacks yellow lores, and clear gray underparts. The head pattern of immatures is similar to that of the adults, but brown and buff colors replace the corresponding black and white colors; note the pinkish bill. This species is also rare during the winter. Brushy areas, woodland edge, hedgerows — especially multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) — and feeders are ideal habitats for White-crowned Sparrows.

8. **Vesper Sparrow.** Of the streaked-breasted sparrows, the Vesper is the only one with white outer tail feathers. A white eye ring, brown cheek patch, streaked breast lacking a central stickpin, and chestnut shoulder patch (not always visible) are other diagnostic characteristics. The bill is generally two-toned: dark upper mandible and pale lower mandible. Typical of an open country-grassland species, the Vesper Sparrow is pale gray-brown on the back. After an initial flight, this bird will often walk when fleeing from an observer. Vesper Sparrows are rare in Iowa during the winter.

9. **Harris' Sparrow.** This large sparrow is recognized in all plumages by its pink bill. The adult has black on the crown, forehead, chin and upper breast; and is streaked with black on the sides of the upper breast and flanks. The underparts are otherwise white. The immature is similar, but only has a necklace of black on the breast and faint streaks of black on an otherwise buffy-brown crown. Seen mostly



in the western half of the state, Harris' Sparrows prefer woodland edge, brushy areas and hedgerows (especially multiflora rose).

10. **Fox Sparrow.** Almost as large as a Harris' Sparrow, the Fox Sparrow's most distinguishing mark is its reddish-orange rump and tail. Rusty coloration also occurs in the wings and in the face, where it is mixed with varying amounts of gray. The breast is heavily streaked with rich, brown spots which converge into a central stickpin. The lower mandible is usually paler than the dark, upper mandible. A rare winter resident in Iowa, the Fox Sparrow is usually found in the southeast, where it frequents brushy areas, woodland edge, weedy fields and hedgerows (especially multiflora rose).

11. **Lincoln's Sparrow.** Fine, dark streaking on a broad, creamy-buff breast band and the sides of the chest is the Lincoln's Sparrow's best field mark. The streaking occasionally forms a central stickpin, but this feature is usually absent. It is told from the similar Song Sparrow by the presence of a whitish eye ring and a grayer face. The eye stripe is gray, the crown is dark brown with a gray central stripe, and the white throat, unlike the immature Swamp Sparrow, is usually finely spotted. Rare in the winter, this species is usually seen in wet thickets, woodland edge or in weedy fields in southern Iowa.

12. **Song Sparrow.** Like the Lincoln's and the Swamp Sparrow, the Song Sparrow has a rounded tail. It is best told by the overall brownish back and tail, and the heavily streaked breast and sides with a well-defined central breast spot. The crown is dark brown, the eye stripe is gray, and the side of the face generally shows more rust/brown colors than does the Lincoln's Sparrow. A common winter resident in grassy, bushy, marshy, riparian and residential habitats throughout the state, the Song Sparrow often "pumps" its rounded tail in flight.

13. **Savannah Sparrow.** This species is best separated from the similar Song Sparrow by its notched tail, white median crown stripe, and yellowish eye stripe and lores. The whitish undersides are heavily streaked with brown and a central stickpin is occasionally present. While it is sometimes difficult to discern the yellow lores, the white median crown stripe is always present. A bird of the open country, it prefers to walk rather than fly when fleeing from an observer. This species is rare in Iowa during the winter.

Three other species which occur in Iowa during the winter include the Northern Cardinal, Rufous-sided Towhee and the House Sparrow. The former two are easily identified by their distinctive plumages, although the towhee is a rare winter resident. The male House Sparrow has a black chin, a dark bill that is light brown at the base, a gray crown and a rufous or chestnut nape. The female is characterized by dirty-gray underparts, a brown crown, and a broad, buffy eye line. House Sparrows often occur in large flocks, especially in residential areas. (Observers along the Mississippi River in s.e. Iowa should check flocks of House Sparrows for brown caps, the best mark of the Eurasian Tree Sparrow which has been observed just across the border in Illinois. ed)

The abundance and distribution of bird species are constantly changing. The observer in Iowa should remain alert for the occurrence of some of the other North American sparrows the winter ranges of which do not normally include Iowa.

#### Summary

As an aid to participants involved in organized bird surveys, the technique of identifying wintering Iowa sparrows and finches (Families *Emberizidae*, *Passeridae* and *Fringillidae*) is discussed. Field/feeder identification of sparrows and finches is broken down into five categories: plumage, song, call notes, behavior and flight pattern, and habitat. Four popular field guides are rated according to how well they enable observers to identify sparrows. The distinguishing field marks are discussed for each of the sparrows and finches which are regularly seen in Iowa during the winter.



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## The Early Years of Iowa Bird Life

FRED J. PIERCE  
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The Iowa Ornithologists' Union had its beginning at a meeting of the Iowa Conservation Association, held at Ames, Feb. 28, 1923. An organization of Iowa bird students was first proposed by Dr. T.C. Stephens, and he was a leader in the initial steps. About 50 people attended this meeting. I did not attend, but I paid dues that year and wrote to various friends to urge them to join the group, for which I attained the status of Charter Member. I am now the last surviving Charter Member.

A series of mimeographed letters, sent somewhat irregularly, kept the members informed of activities during the years 1923 through 1928. Dr. F. L. R. Roberts began a quarterly printed *Bulletin* in February, 1929, and published seven issues. He found that he had too little time to continue it, and he turned the job over to me. I had



FRED J. PIERCE IN 1936

appointed me as an assistant editor and suggested that I write a department column. This was called "The Bird's Eye View" and it appeared in the last two issues. I consented to take over the full editorship and got out the final issue of *The Bulletin*. It was No. 8, late in 1930, and printed at Independence.

As editor, I wanted an entirely new beginning for the journal, with a different title and in a smaller size. *The Bulletin* was printed on letter-size sheets and there was nothing distinctive about the title. Walter Bennett, the Union's incumbent president, was opposed to any changes. He told me that the purpose of the publication should be rather on the order of a newsletter and I should print as many names

of members as possible, for, he said, it was a psychological fact that people liked to see their names in print.

The new editor was already in trouble! Certainly, I was in a quandary. I asked Atty. Arthur Palas, a former IOU president, for advice. He told me that since I was making a new beginning and was willing to do all the work, it should be my choice as to the name, the format and the size of page. He agreed that it should be a quarterly publication. A number of members were canvassed for opinions on a suitable title. Bird names were suggested, among them the Dickcissel as being a typical Iowa bird. But so many bird journals were named after birds. Once it was thought that **The Iowa Bird** might be suitable. It was finally decided that **Iowa Bird Life** would set it apart from all others and leave no question as to what state it represented. So the new effort came out in March, 1931, as Vol. 1, No. 1 (New Series). In a later year, I was gratified to have Walter tell me that he thought I had done the right thing and the little magazine was a credit to the organization.

A membership roll was printed in 1932, and it showed 140 paid members and about three dozen libraries. Dues were only one dollar, and libraries and out-of-state members paid only fifty cents a year. Obviously, funds for publishing were low. Some advertising was obtained (at low rates), but with a circulation of less than 300, it was difficult to attract advertisers. The 1932 membership list was printed in solid lines to save space, always a consideration. Later lists were printed at irregular intervals, in columnar form but without street addresses, also to conserve space. It was deemed that members' names were important for historical record but street addresses were not! Financial statements after the annual meetings were not printed, mostly because we did not care to reveal the low bank balances that we necessarily carried.

The first two issues of **Iowa Bird Life** were printed in a newspaper office at Independence, then it was decided that typography could be improved, and we engaged the Mercer Printing Company, of Iowa City, which did the printing through 1945. We changed to the Hawkeye-Record Press, Mount Vernon, in 1946.

Besides meager funds for printing, another problem for the editor was getting the members to send in items. We were an organization comprised mostly of amateur bird watchers, many of whom were reluctant to write for publication. We had some trained professionals who generously contributed articles, but at first there were not many. Those who criticized the journal because it was not scientific enough did not understand the situation. Very often the editor was faced with the prospect of having a 12- or 16-page issue coming up with very little copy on hand. Sometimes I filled out with all the "Membership News" I could get; book reviews were always a good source for needed copy, and some of them were rather extended.

The December issue of 1936 is well remembered. It had been a bad year in many ways, including a severe drought in Iowa. A 12-page issue of **Iowa Bird Life** was in the offing to end the year, but all the copy I had on hand was the one-page self-cover (we always used a self-cover to save expense), and two pages of bird notes from members. We had never combined two issues into one, and at the end of the year that couldn't be done.

I wrote an article on Audubon's visit to Iowa (2½ pages), also an obituary note, a book review and member news (1½ pages), but what saved the day was the sudden (and worthwhile) idea to print the bird notes contained in the mimeographed letters of the IOU of 1926-1928 (5 pages). I filled the 12 pages and the issue was out on time! (We were seldom very late and we had four issues every year).

In the effort to get suitable material for publication, I made frequent pleas for members to send in their bird notes, but that put me in the obligatory position of having to publish almost everything that was offered, since it had been asked for



and submitted in all sincerity. Articles were edited and sometimes rewritten in part. This led to hard feelings when, for instance, a record was considered "wild" or very unlikely and not printed. Some articles were judiciously toned down, and such sentimental words as "dickeybirds" and "darling little birdies" were always pruned out.

Dr. T. C. Stephens, the very fine editor of *The Wilson Bulletin* for 14 years, gave me this sage advice after my first issue:

"I hope you will have the courage to exclude from the pages all questionable field records. People ought to be a little charitable toward an editor for letting errors into print when he did not know they were errors; but to publish a doubtful record merely to avoid giving offense is a very great wrong. And occasionally this dilemma puts us in a tight place, but there is only one answer that can be given by the scientific man."

As the years went by, there was great improvement. Our membership grew very substantially. Dues were increased and we had more money to work with. Many serious bird students were attracted to our group. They worked their bird notes and careful field observations into fine articles, which enhanced the good reputation we were achieving as a state bird journal. Some of our professional ornithologists, especially those associated with educational institutions, were using *Iowa Bird Life* as a medium of publication for their important migration and bird-behavior studies. Our status was elevated. Conservation of wildlife was coming to the forefront and we were covering some of the many aspects.

Group participation in our activities, such as the annual conventions, held in various cities in the state, as well as Christmas bird counts and other events, drew the members together in a fine and enduring spirit of camaraderie. The members built the organization. The editor fitted things together for the magazine.

The work of the editor was never dull and unexpected problems turned up now and then. Poetry was sometimes contributed (one person suggested that payment be made for it!). I had never studied versification, seldom read poetry, and did not understand it well enough to appreciate it. Therefore, I couldn't tell good poetry from bad, so I decided not to get involved. It was easy to return such offerings by saying that we did not use verse. Only a few poems were printed during my 30 years as editor.

My ambition was to have an illustrated magazine, but in the early years we had almost no money for halftone cuts. I borrowed cuts from other publications when they were timely for scheduled articles and could be obtained. I tried to record the personal histories of our members through biographical sketches and obituary notices. In this I obtained and printed as many photos as I could. Thus a part of the Union's history was documented.

Editing was done as carefully as possible. Galley proof was furnished by our printer and read by my wife Reva and me. I pasted up the "dummy" from the galleys for each issue, after which the printer sent a page-proof. In spite of our best efforts, errors would occasionally creep in. One glaring example that I recall had a Bald Eagle with white wings (head) and tail (page 69, 1951), a disconcerting slip that escaped both editing and proof-reading. Reva also hand-addressed all the mailings for several years when our circulation was small.

One important job of the editor, never stressed or mentioned, was public relations — trying to get along with everybody and suggesting now and then, when appropriate, that money for illustrations or extra pages would be very welcome. The generosity of our members helped greatly in publishing and should not be overlooked as an important financial resource. Three complete issues of *Iowa Bird Life* were paid for entirely outside of the Union's funds. Also paid for were four colored plates and many extra pages. Without this very significant help, the

magazine would have been smaller and less attractive.

Looking back on my 30 years of editing *Iowa Bird Life*, I think my hard work was very much worthwhile. It was, in fact, almost an education, as I researched so many things for accuracy before publishing them. My solicitude for the little magazine became a part of my life. I am glad that my destined role was to get the first issue off the ground and to help keep the little journal afloat through those lean, early years. In my final tenure, the pressure of other things claimed too much of my time and I decided to say farewell at the end of Vol. 30, 1960. A fortunate circumstance was that I could turn it over to a capable new editor.

A very fine token of appreciation was tendered me at the Ottumwa convention banquet in 1961, and the Union's **Resolutions** adopted at that meeting were nicely expressed. Numerous letters of appreciation were received from members and are treasured possessions. One of these, from Dr. George Hendrickson, a former Union president, is especially prized. He wrote, in part:

"I read you have resigned the editorship of *Iowa Bird Life*. Thirty years of your work, without controversy, free of any petty and irrelevant words by you, speak more highly for you than I can state. To manage a magazine for amateurs and scientists with the highest regard by all is a truly significant accomplishment for so many years."

## Iowa Ornithologists' Union Meeting — Fall 1984

FRANCIS L. MOORE

336 Fairfield

WATERLOO, IOWA

The fall meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union was held in and near Muscatine, Iowa on Saturday and Sunday, September 8 and 9, 1984. Pete Petersen, with the help of Mary Lou Petersen, did an excellent job of putting together a very enjoyable weekend.

The Saturday morning field trip to Big Sand Mound Preserve that was supposed to follow registration was postponed to that afternoon because of rain. It rained steadily from 8:00 a.m. until after 12:00. President Mike Newlon announced that the paper sessions would be held in place of the field trip with the field trip to take place following lunch.

Jeff Klieve, from the Monsanto Corporation, gave a quick overview of Monsanto, its products and its work. Sally Hinz, from Iowa-Illinois Gas and Electric Company, gave an interesting history of the new power plant south of Muscatine and the area set aside on the power plant grounds named Big Sand Mound Nature Preserve. A description of the area followed with slides of the area and plants and animal life that are found there. She discussed Iowa-Illinois' ongoing studies and protection priorities for the area.

Pete Petersen then gave a program on his special breeding bird studies on the Big Sand Mound Preserve area. He showed some very good slides on some of the breeding birds on and near the area, some rare and some not so rare.

Following Pete's program, Tom Kent moderated a panel discussion on "Fall Warblers." The panel was made up of: Paul Martsching from Ames, Pete Petersen from Davenport and John Robinson from Herrin, Illinois. They responded to several questions from Tom as to how they find warblers in the fall, where to look for fall warblers, when they might be expected to arrive and depart and their frequency of occurrence in Iowa. Tom then made a very good summary of these points before having Pete's slides shown of all fall warblers that you could expect



to see in Iowa; with female, male, immature and adult birds shown as the panel discussed fine points on identification of each species.

Everyone then enjoyed lunch at the recreation building on the Monsanto grounds. By the time lunch was over the rain had stopped and everyone interested got in their vehicles and formed a caravan to go to the Big Sand Mount Nature Preserve on the field trip that had originally been scheduled for that morning. The Big Sand Mound Nature Preserve proved to be a very unique area. Gerald White of Muscatine provided canoes for those who wished to bird from the waters of a pond. Due to the fact that the field trip was held in the afternoon few species of birds were seen but most got to see the Ornate Box Turtle and the Illinois Mud Turtle that are quite common on the Preserve. A passing Merlin was seen by most of the birders as it lingered in a dead tree.

The business meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. by President Mike Newlon. Cal Knight made a motion that the Spring 1984 minutes be approved as printed in the June 1984 (Vol. 54, No. 2) issue of *Iowa Bird Life*. Marlys Huff seconded the motion. The motion carried. Dave Newhouse gave information on the status of the Iowa Breeding Bird Atlas project. He had several hand outs on the project and information on how and when to count birds in the Breeding Bird Blocks. He urged all present to sign up and help in censusing Iowa's breeding birds.

Carl Bendorf gave a review of the status of the I.O.U. membership, showing 500+ members at present. He also gave a report on the feeder bird survey from last winter. Approximately 950 people requested information about the I.O.U. from the feeder bird survey. Over 50 new members had been gained from our work with the feeder bird survey so far.

Jim Dinsmore gave a report from the Constitution Review Committee. He handed out a draft of the proposed new I.O.U. Constitution for people to review and suggest changes to the steering committee for consideration by the membership prior to the Spring 1985 meeting, so that an annotated proposed new constitution and bylaws could be presented to the membership at least 30 days before the annual Spring 1985 meeting. He also handed out a copy of the present constitution along with the present articles of incorporation approved by the membership in 1953 with revisions since then. He made a quick review and compared the old constitution to the proposed new constitution and enumerated the differences and purposes of the proposed changes. Jim asked for and received a round of applause to show the I.O.U.'s appreciation to Mike Newlon for his contributions to the Union while being president of our group since he would be leaving the state prior to the next annual meeting.

Everyone was reminded that the Spring 1985 meeting would be held at Marshalltown during the weekend of June 1st, a change from the dates announced at the spring meeting. Barb Wilson made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Roberta Oppedahl seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Saturday evening the banquet dinner was held at the Hotel Muscatine with a very good meal being served buffet style. Following the meal Pete Petersen presented a quiz of 20 slides of Iowa birds. Prizes were given to the top four with President Newlon scoring the highest total. Dave Newhouse then showed a slide and tape program on steel vs. lead shot and asked each member present to write their legislators requesting them to vote for a ban on the use of lead shot for waterfowl within the borders of Iowa. Dave's program was followed by a member slidefest with five members showing the group some of their slides.

The Sunday field trips left from the parking lot adjacent to the Hotel Muscatine at about 7:00 a.m. The four groups Mark Twain NWR, Wildcat Den SP, Credit Island and Cone Marsh. People trickled in to the Saulsbury Bridge Nature Center

located northwest of Muscatine for lunch with stories of the good birds that were found on the various field trips that morning. After a very good buffet lunch Pete Petersen led the compilation of the bird list with 132 species being seen on Sunday with an additional 6 being seen on Saturday only. Some of the more interesting birds sighted were: Red-shouldered Hawk, Western Kingbird, Kentucky Warbler, Connecticut Warbler, a Red Knot was also seen by several of our members on the Illinois shore of the Mississippi River. A complete list of birds as recorded will be sent upon request. Please send your request to the Secretary of the I.O.U., a copy will be forwarded to you. The meeting was then adjourned.

#### Registered Attendance — 100

ADEL: Ken Herring

AMES: Gladys Clarke, Jim and Steve Dinsmore, Paul Martsching, Dave and Mary Newhouse, Judy and Peter VanderLinden.

BETTENDORF: Leah Levin.

BOONE: Bruce Ehresman.

BOONEVILLE: Eloise and Eugene Armstrong.

CEDAR RAPIDS: Karen and Robert Bradley, Roberta Oppedahl.

CENTERVILLE: Dorothy Cornett, Ray Cummins, Mary Montgomery.

COLO: Hank Zaletel.

DAVENPORT: Ann and Bill Barker, Brian, Corey and Lewis Blevins, Camilla Bowman, Sally Hinz, Mary Lou and Peter Petersen.

DES MOINES: John and Margaret Hoogerheide, Lester Zimmer.

DUBUQUE: Frieda and George Crossley.

ELDORA: Nancy Slife.

ESTHERVILLE: Harold, Katie and Sallie White.

GILMAN: Jeanette and Kenneth Graham.

HASTINGS: Barbara L. Wilson.

INDIANOLA: Jim Sinclair.

IOWA CITY: Carl Bendorf, John L. Cordell, Dara Dick, Bud Gode, Jim Huntington, Ann and Tom Kent, Bernie and Cal Knight, Mike Newlon, Mary Noble, Mary Parrott, Tom Staudt, Carol Thompson.

KEOKUK: Bob and Mary Cecil.

LeCLAIRE: Don and Jean Moeller.

LISCOMB: Beth and Mark Proescholdt.

MARSHALLTOWN: Marlys Huff, Jim and Pauline Mairs, Carol McMillan.

MASON CITY: Curt Nelson.

McCAUSLAND: Doris and Gil Sandvick.

MONTEZUMA: Darwin Koenig.

MT. VERNON: Gayle Wallace.

MUSCATINE: Jeff Klieve, Vi Lewis, Bill Martin, Lynn Tavener, Gerald White.

OTTUMWA: Don and Elaine Johnson.

PRINCETON: Betty Hunt.

TABOR: Ross Silcock.

TAMA: Nick Kubik.

UNION: Phyllis Harris.

WAPELLO: Leroy Hovell, Ed Wiederrecht.

WATERLOO: Francis L. Moore, Robert Myers.

WAUKEE: Mark Dixon.

WELLMAN: Cathy Conway, Gene and Ruth Eash, Barbara Henderson.

WEST DES MOINES: Mike Brown.

WILTON: Neal Johnson.



## ILLINOIS

ALEDO: Mary Jane Stricklan.

HAMPTON: Kelly McKay.

HERRIN: John Robinson.

MACOMB: Jim Stricklan.

ROCK ISLAND: Judy and Larry Linder.

TAYLOR RIDGE: Sandra Carlson.

## Frederick W. Kent 1894-1984

ROBERT F. VANE

2220 Grande Ave. SE

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52403

The Iowa Ornithologists' Union has lost one of its most able members in the passing of Frederick W. Kent of Iowa City on July 17, 1984. He was 90 years of age and had been a member of the Union since 1950. His wise counsel, his expertise in many fields, his generosity in sharing his knowledge, his kindness and his loyalty as a friend will be long remembered.

Fred Kent's path and mine crossed for the first time in August of 1944. I had just returned from overseas Naval duty in World War II and had been assigned to the Navy Preflight school in Iowa City. I had long been interested in birds and had put together a movie of winter birding experiences. We had invited Dr. and Mrs. Peter Laude and their good friends, Fred and Clara Kent, for an evening of movies. That evening started a friendship which was to last for 40 years.

Soon the Kents, the Laudes and the Vanes were birding every weekend sharing — in those days of rationing — red stamps and gas coupons for the weekend activities.

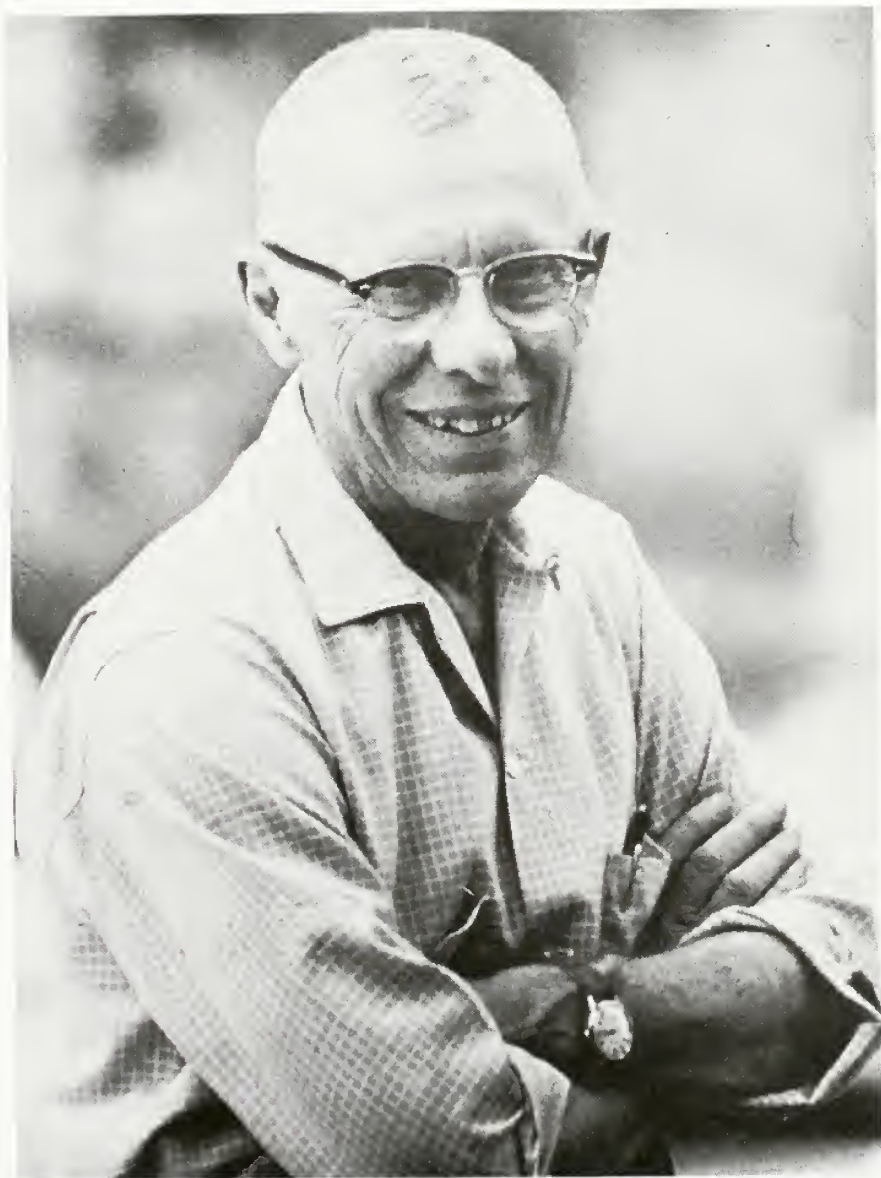
Fred loved the Iowa countryside and felt that it presented beauty at all times. His landscape photos taken through the seasons, often from the same vantage point, were among his favorites.

From the perspective of this 40 year relationship, Fred's life can be seen as a wonderful, rich experience of three main parts: A professional photographic career, an ornithological avocation which often went hand in hand with photography, and a wonderful family life. He, of course, was an expert photographer and an accomplished ornithologist with an exceptionally keen ear.

Fred was born February 3, 1894, in DeWitt, Iowa. His first photos were taken with a camera which he had earned by working in his father's drug store. In 1911 he enrolled at the University of Iowa and was graduated in 1915 having earned a large share of his expenses by taking photographs for the University.

At the time of his graduation in 1915, University officials gave him a small office in the old physics building and named him University Photographer. In 1921 he became the founding director of the University Photographic Service. This Service became the founding director of the University Photographic Service. This Service his 60 year career, there wasn't a facet of university life that wasn't recorded by Fred's camera. Iowa City Historian Irving Weber wrote that Kent probably didn't realize in 1908 "that he was establishing a career in photography that in the next 70 years would chronicle the growth, progress and changes of the University of Iowa — and along with it much of the history of Iowa City and Johnson County."

For 20 years or more he was also the medical photographer for University Hospitals and the College of Medicine. In this capacity, he exposed literally thousands of micros, photographs taken through a microscope, a field in which he was particularly proficient since he knew which field of the slide illustrated the particular condition the professor required for teaching purposes.



Frederick W. Kent

Aerial photographs came along too, when two friends had planes and would invite Fred to go along. He would use those opportunities to shoot aerials of birding areas showing the water levels, pools and timbered tracts for later ground exploration.

Another facet of his photography was that of stereo photography: A system in which pictures are seen through a viewer and become three dimensional. How many delightful hours friends had at 302 Richards Street, the Kent family home, looking through viewers at a new collection of stereos. Fred's den was very complete with a wall of book shelves housing his ornithological library. To the left of his



desk were filing cabinets filled with photographic albums. There were files of slides with the photos of each bird species properly separated and labeled. Immediately outside a casement window was a driftwood bird feeder. It was a friendly room where Fred spent hours working on his notes, slides and albums. Naturally, then, this room became a mecca for returning students and birders. And, with the visits of friends, the conversation was always interesting and spirited, broadening each one's horizons.

It is no wonder that with this wealth of photographic material a great deal of it has found a place in the F.W. Kent Photographic Archives Special Collection of the University of Iowa libraries.

Fred's ornithological interest had existed from boyhood days. At the age of 14, young Fred was sending lists of birds observed in the DeWitt area to Prof. Wells W. Cooke, Biologist of the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture.

This interest persisted and became more important after the mid 1940s when the Photographic Service had been reorganized and a bit more time was available. It was then that the meticulous bird record keeping began with the weekly and mid-weekly trips to the fine birding areas around Iowa City. Those areas included Swan Lake, Lake Macbride State Park, the Amana Colonies, Amana Lake, Cone Marsh, and later the Coralville Reservoir and Muskrat Slough.

It was our good fortune to be along on a great many of those birding trips especially in the '40s and '50s, and on each trip Fred had cameras along and took pictures of habitats, the birders and the birds themselves, the last-mentioned often through a telescope mounted on a car window mount.

The photos and stories of many of these trips have appeared in *Iowa Bird Life*, and we find that Fred authored at least 12 major articles in *I.B.L.* as well as contributing 24 notes to that publication. Other contributions to *I.B.L.* included many photos showing at least 59 species of Iowa birds and photographs showing birding localities, some of which were aerial views. Also published in *I.B.L.* were photographs taken at I.O.U. conventions of the birders and their activities.

For the period from 1944 until 1964, the Kents and Laudes attended the monthly meetings of the Cedar Rapids Bird club to which organization Fred contributed programs regularly. When the Cedar Rapids group became interested in owls, Fred obliged by locating roosts of Long-eared Owls west of Swan Lake. Often he found flocks of wintering Short-eared Owls. He located Great Horned Owl nests and discovered wintering Saw-whet Owls. In one year the number of Saw-whet Owls reported on the Iowa City Christmas census was the greatest in the nation.

When Bell's Vireo was needed for a list, or LeConte's Sparrow, or Yellow-breasted Chat, it was Fred who found them and recorded the fact.

The culmination of the record keeping and the bird photography which went hand in hand was the publication in 1975 of "Birding in Eastern Iowa," a book that he and his son, Tom, co-authored. The monograph covers 25 years of birdwatching experience in the vicinity of Iowa City beginning in January 1949 through December of 1973. During this 25 year period, 3,476 trips were made, an average of 139 trips per year. During the 25 years, 270 Iowa species were recorded of which 202 were photographed. The weekly bird records became the data base for the book and were transferred to computer cards for analysis.

Although birding in Johnson County was paramount, Fred also enjoyed longer birding trips to Minnesota and North Dakota, to Colorado and also to Saskatchewan, Canada. It was our good fortune to accompany him on trips to Jasper-Pulaski in Indiana for Greater Sandhill Cranes, to the Platte River in Nebraska for Lesser Sandhill Cranes, and to Colorado for birding with Fred's long-time friend, Alfred M. Bailey, who was then director of the Denver Museum of Natural History.



"F.W." and Woody Brown on a birding trip to Nebraska to see Sandhill Cranes. March, 1967.

Other trips enjoyed with Fred were to the Hayden Prairie for Henslow's Sparrow, to Duluth for the autumn hawk flight, as well as to many I.O.U. conventions.

After each of these trips, a packet of pictures would arrive from Fred, prized mementoes of wonderful times. After some of the longer trips, a spiral bound album of superb photos would arrive, albums which are now treasured memories of happy hours in the field.

With this ornithological and conservation interest, and because of the respect with which he was held in the community, Fred was honored by having a county park west of Iowa City on Highway 6 named in his honor. F.W. Kent Park, established in May of 1967, is a showpiece of the Johnson County Park System.

In addition to being an accomplished photographer and expert ornithologist, Fred was also a devoted husband and father. Fred was married to Clara R. Hartman on June 16, 1917, in Davenport. His wedding date was the same as that of his good friend, Alfred Bailey. Thus the two couples celebrated by canoeing down the Iowa River on their wedding trip. Clara often shared Fred's "expeditions" in the countryside. We remember well in later years seeing the two of them picnicking in their Volkswagen Beetle parked beside Swan Lake, watching the ducks settling on to the lake at sunset. Clara passed away in 1972.

Their children, all of whom live in Iowa City, are James, Barbara (Mrs. Charles A. Buckley), Charles and Thomas.

To the many who knew him, Fred represented that which is fine in life. He will be remembered for his steadfast qualities, a man who left his mark on Iowa City, Johnson County and also on countless University students whose experience touched him during their school years. We feel fortunate indeed that we had him as a friend.



# Barrow's Goldeneye

## in Fremont Co., Iowa, and an Analysis of Interior Vagrancy Patterns

75

W. ROSS SILCOCK

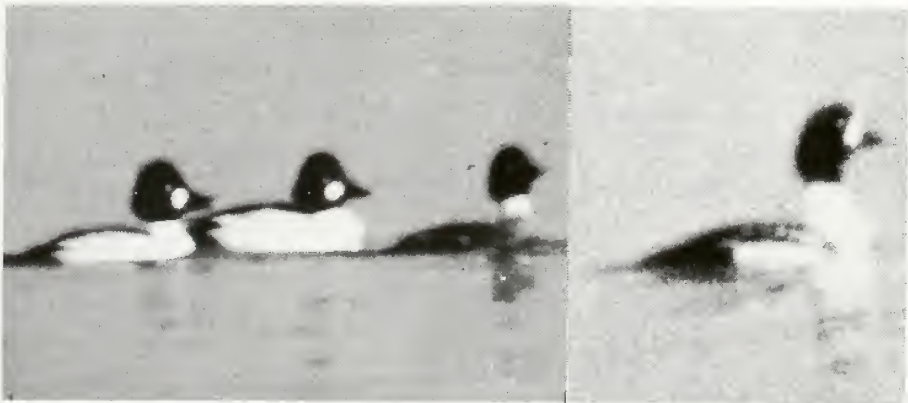
Box 300

TABOR, IOWA 51653

On March 24, 1983, I was contacted by Denis Thompson, Eugene Armstrong, and Eloise Armstrong, who had just identified a Barrow's Goldeneye (*Bucephala islandica*) at Forney's Lake in Fremont County. We immediately returned to the lake and found the bird, apparently Iowa's first confirmed record (Dinsmore et al, 1984). After notifying other birders that evening, many came to see the bird on March 25, a Sunday. Among them was Tom Kent, who photographed the Barrow's Goldeneye at some distance, resulting in the identifiable photographs used with this article. Upon spreading the word of the bird's presence, it was discovered that it had in fact been found first on March 17 by Michael Nolan of Ames, Iowa.

Many observers have forwarded documentation forms to the Iowa Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, and the description given here is to some extent a distillation of the critical identification points noted.

The immediate impression of the swimming bird was its darkness by comparison with the many nearby Common Goldeneyes. This darker appearance was due to much reduced white on the wings, to the point that all that remained was a row of white spots entirely surrounded by black. There was also a larger area of black in the shoulder area, with the black feathering reaching almost to the water. Comparison with Common Goldeneyes also revealed a significant difference in head shape, to me probably the most interesting point, as it allows separation of females also, the plumages of female Common and Barrow's Goldeneyes being very similar on swimming birds. The Barrow's Goldeneyes had an almost vertical forehead rising from the base of the bill, while nearby Common Goldeneyes showed a rearward slope of the forehead, almost at 45 degrees (see photos). Further more, the bill of the Barrow's was noticeably small, adding to the "puffy-headed" appearance of the bird. The Barrow's also had an obviously crescent-shaped white area between the eye and the bill, with the upper point of the crescent reaching above an imaginary line between the eye and bill, while the round spot of the Common was completely below such a line. This was noticed by Carl Bendorf



Common Goldeneyes, 25 March 1984 Forney L. Photo by T.H. Kent  
Barrow's Goldeneye, 25 March 1984 Forney L. Photo by T.H. Kent

of Iowa City. These factors lent a diagnostic appearance to the head of the Barrow's Goldeneye, and could be used to determine whether a female was present. In my opinion there was no female with the bird March 24 or 25, but indications were made to me that a female was seen at later dates, although I have seen no documentation of such a bird or birds.

There are two breeding populations of Barrow's Goldeneye in North America, and a case can be made, based on records from the states surrounding Iowa, for appearance in Iowa of birds from either population. Of course, confirmation of such conjecture is only possible through banding data, as noted by Palmer (1976). One group breeds near the Atlantic coast of Canada, normally wintering along the Atlantic coast south as far as New Jersey, with a small number wintering in southwestern Lake Michigan and on "open stretches of rivers in that general region" (Palmer, 1976). The other group breeds in the mountains of southern Alaska, western Canada, and the northwestern United States, as far southeastward as Wyoming. These western birds winter primarily on the Pacific coast as far south as California, although there are a few birds which winter on open water in the interior, such as at Yellowstone National Park (Palmer, 1976).

Thus there are wintering birds from both breeding populations in areas from which vagrants may easily reach Iowa. Wintering birds are often found on Estes Lake on the eastern edge of the Colorado Rockies (Lane and Holt, 1973), and on the Missouri River at Garrison Dam in North Dakota (Lambeth and Faanes, 1981). Such birds would be expected to move southwestward in the late fall if cold weather caused freezeup of their wintering areas (due to the northwesterly direction of the prevailing winds at that time), and would likely enter drainages of such southeastwardly flowing river systems as the Platte in Nebraska and the Missouri in South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, and Missouri. The evidence for such a movement is strong, in that there have been some 16 records from Nebraska and South Dakota, most near major river systems, and at such times as to indicate movement in fall and spring as well as overwintering (Whitney et al, 1978; Johnsgard, 1980; Cortelyou, 1983). Interestingly, 4 of 6 South Dakota records and 7 of 11 Nebraska records are in spring. This point will be discussed further.

Wintering birds presumed to be from the eastern breeding population (Palmer, 1976) can be found on Lake Michigan, and Bohlen (1978) considers Barrow's Goldeneye to be a rare migrant and winter resident in Illinois, implying regular status in the state. In Minnesota and Wisconsin Barrow's Goldeneye appears to be somewhat less regular, being listed as casual in Minnesota on Lake Superior and the Mississippi River (Green and Janssen, 1975), while Barger et al (1975) indicate irregular occurrence on Lake Michigan from fall into spring. Recent records in Illinois cited by Bohlen include several from parts of the state away from Lake Michigan, suggesting southward movement during late fall and winter of a few individual birds. That some birds winter on the Mississippi River is indicated by Clawson (1982), who shows Barrow's Goldeneye to be a winter vagrant on the Mississippi in northeast Missouri.

These data indicate that Barrow's Goldeneye may reach Iowa from the east via Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River or from the west via the Missouri or Platte Rivers.

It is interesting to speculate on the reasons why most of the western records (South Dakota and Nebraska) are in spring. A simple explanation may be that in fall some male first year birds (the age class most prone to wander) still retain the female-like Basic I plumage and are overlooked, although Palmer (1976) states that most young males have acquired the adult drake-like Alternate I plumage by mid-winter. By spring however, all males should have acquired adult drake-like plumage and would be less likely to be overlooked. A more intriguing possibility is



that some of the Barrow's Goldeneyes derived from the eastern population and wintering on Lake Michigan may move in a northwestward direction in spring after being forced south by bad winter conditions, especially those birds wintering on the Mississippi River. These birds might follow the Missouri-Platte systems in spring, assisted by the prevailing southeastward winds at that time of year, thus augmenting the numbers of birds found in spring on these river systems.

(Thanks are due to Thomas H. Kent for critically reviewing this article.)

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## Short-eared Owls at Hayden Prairie

RUSSELL P. BALDNER

Box 244

CALMAR, IOWA

On March 22, 1981, I visited Hayden Prairie to investigate the preserve's harbinger of spring and observed late that afternoon two Short-eared Owls engaged in aerial courtship display. The mating ritual consisted of numerous dives and swoops, during which a bird rapidly slaps its wings together under its breast, producing an audible clapping sound over an otherwise still prairie. Periodic visits to the preserve that spring indicated that the birds were not simply migrating through the area, but rather, were going to stay for the breeding season. The courtship flights continued throughout April and early May, with the birds, at one point on April 24, performing a double spiral tumble while apparently clenching each other's beaks.

The possibility of a breeding pair of Short-eared Owls was of great interest and significance, since this species is, at best, an extremely uncommon summer resident of the state. Brown (1971) indicates that the bird was an uncommon winter, and rare summer, permanent resident of Iowa, which, however, was suspected of nesting at Hayden Prairie in 1958. Roosa (1977) classifies the Short-eared Owl as



Young Short-eared Owl at Hayden Prairie 6-19-1981.

Photo by Russell P. Baldner

extirpated, there having been "no nesting records in Iowa in recent decades." Dinsmore, et. al (1984) mentions this 1981 nesting, lists two nesting records for the 1960s and calls the species "one of Iowa's rarest nesting birds."

A visit to the prairie on May 31 witnessed a significantly different behavior on the part of the owls. During most of May there had been little courtship display activity. On the above date, however, an owl once again performed the wing-slapping dive and seemed to be more agitated at our presence. My wife and I suspected that we were near their nest. On June 17 we saw three owls, two of which were out on the bare gravel road which runs by the preserve. The third of the trio located itself along the edge of the prairie next to the road, squawked at us, and again dived repeatedly as in the mating flight. Black (1979) observes that the Short-eared Owls "stage 'distraction displays' . . . sometimes resorting to the wing-clapping act of the courtship flight."

Two days later, on June 19, we saw three or four owls at the prairie, one of which was unmistakably a young short-ear sitting near the edge of an adjacent soybean field. The bean plants were still small and allowed a very good view of the young bird. Furthermore, the short-ear appeared to be rather unconcerned about our presence, allowing a close approach. With binoculars from our position on the road, I could see the very small "ear" tufts on the top of its head. The bird's golden yellow eyes were also unmistakable, with blackish borders above them and white around the beak. The lower part of the facial disc was also clearly edged with white. The breast and upper legs were a soft brown and tan, with some vertical streaks near the breast. Thanks to the cooperative nature of the young bird, I was able to take a picture of it at close range. Crawling through the ditch, I approached the fence at the edge of the field and snapped a photo of the young bird from about 15-20 feet. About one week later we again observed four Short-eared owls sitting rather calmly in some of the small trees on the native prairie. Our last observation of the season of these unique creatures was on August 4, 1981. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no nestings at Hayden Prairie since the summer of 1981, although the Short-eared Owls have regularly visited for a while in the spring.

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# Field Reports

79

SUMMER 1984

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## WEATHER AND HABITAT CONDITIONS (JPSa)

June 1984 was a wet and stormy month which closed out the second quarter of the year as the state's second wettest spring quarter in 112 years. The month averaged about 150% of normal precipitation and ranks as the second wettest June on record. Most of this rain occurred during the first 18 days, followed by moderate or less than normal amounts during the latter days. June "busted out" with severe storms, frequent tornadoes, hail, and damaging winds. The night of 7-9 June produced heavy rainfall and reports of some 20 tornadoes, exceeding the previous one-day record of tornadoes reported on 30 April 1967 and about equal to a typical year's total. While temperatures for the month averaged only one degree above normal, extremes were notable: 40 F at Boone and Anamosa on the 3rd; 94 F at Fort Dodge, Sac City, and Logan on the 26th; and 96 F at Tipton on the 17th.

The month of July was almost boring with its return to normal weather phenomena. Precipitation and temperatures were those to which Iowans are accustomed. Well-spaced rains and temperatures occasionally reaching into the 100s were typical of July in Iowa.

The heavy rains in early and mid June left almost 10% of Iowa's cropland under water with the flooding mainly in western and central Iowa. Mini (and maxi) lakes dotted the landscape and hinted of the wetlands that once covered Iowa. Besides the flooded fields, numerous rivers went out of their banks and flooded adjacent lowlands, especially along the Missouri and Des Moines rivers as well as the Skunk River. In addition, the abandonment of the PIK program meant that Iowa's cropland again was planted fencerow to fencerow.

The impact of all of the rain on birds is open to conjecture. There certainly was plenty of shorebird habitat available and presumably fish-eating birds had a feast on fish trapped in floodwater ponds. Hundreds of Common Grackles feeding on crayfish in flooded fields in Fremont County in late July exemplifies such a response (TB). On the other hand, such heavy rains and high water should lead to nest losses for many ground- or low-nesting birds and to additional mortality of many of the recently fledged birds. As is usual, there was little direct evidence of such losses although presumably surveys of game species such as pheasants and Bobwhite later in the summer will show some such effects. One example of mortality was the flooding of nests of Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds in Dickinson County, with some marshes having 4 foot elevations in their water level overnight (MiB).

## GENERAL TRENDS

Although spring migration was generally late, there were few migrants lingering on into summer. Most shorebirds were gone by the first days of June and only a few passerines stayed that late. A few southbound shorebirds showed up by late June with a fairly strong movement of some species by mid-July. The abundance of shorebird habitat probably made shorebirds somewhat more spread out and thus more difficult to detect. No early-migrating passerines were reported by the end of the period.

## USUAL SIGHTINGS

One species new to Iowa, Black-necked Stilt, was reported this summer. This record awaits action by the Records Committee. Probably equally exciting was the first nesting record for both Cattle Egret and Little Blue Heron for Iowa. Nesting Western Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Harrier, and Least Tern were also good finds. Although the summer season typically has few Casual species, the four reported this year (ibis species, King

Rail, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher) plus one Accidental (Great-tailed Grackle) is about typical. Also unusual were summer sightings of Swainson's Thrush, White-throated Sparrow, Clay-colored Sparrow, and Worm-eating Warbler. At least the last two might nest in Iowa. A Western Tanager belatedly reported from spring is the sixth Iowa record.

#### SPECIES DATA (\* — documented)

**Pied-billed Grebe:** Nests or broods were found at Rush L., Osceola Co. (JJD), Union Sl. (JJD), Anderson L. (AT), Larson M., Story Co. (PM), and Colo Ponds (JJD, SD, PM, HZ).

**Eared Grebe:** 2-4 were seen at Rush L., Osceola Co. on 15 and 18 Jun (JJD, BPr, MPr, PH).

**Western Grebe:** 3-4 dark phase adults were at Rush L., Osceola Co. on 15 Jun (JJD) and 18 Jun (BPr, MPr, PH). A pair was attending a downy young there on 15 Jul (JJD) and 23 Jul (HZ) with a third adult on the latter date. This is the second nesting record for Iowa, both at Rush L.

**American White Pelican:** Singles were at Union S. on 2-3 Jun (JJD, THK, CJB, TJS) and Ingham L. on 27 Jul (HZ). 60 were at Mud L., Clay Co. on 1 June (JJD).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** 11 nests were found at Coralville Res. on 18 Jul (TAT) for the second Iowa nesting this year. Others were reported from 7 locales, the most unusual being 1 at McFarland P., Story Co. on 12 Jul (SDL) and 16 in Fremont Co. on 26 Jul (TB, BPa).

**American Bittern:** 1 at Cooper M., Story Co. on 13 Jun (SDL) and 12 Jul (LZ) was the only report.

**Least Bittern:** Besides several reports from its NW Iowa stronghold, singles were seen at Forney L. on 6 Jun (BPa, LPa, TB), Effigy Mounds N.M. on 16 Jun (DK), Folsom L. on 1 and 4 Jul (BPa, LPa, TB), Cooper M., Story Co. on 26 Jun (JJD), 2 at Lewis and Clark S.P. on 21 Jul (TB), 4 at New Albin on 22 Jun (DK), and 5 at Anderson L. in mid Jun (AT).

**Great Blue Heron:** A heronry of 9 nests was found below Saylorville Dam on 27 Jul (\*BE), 68 in Fremont Co. on 10 Jun (BPa, BLW) was early for a large concentration while 40 in Fremont Co. on 26 Jul (TB, BPa) and 40 at Ingham L. on 27 Jul (HZ) were more typical.

**Great Egret:** 54 at New Albin on 22 Jun (DK) and 66 in Fremont Co. on 10 Jul (BPa, BLW) were the largest groups recorded.

**Little Blue Heron:** Little Blues nested at Folsom L., Mills Co. the first nesting record for Iowa. Counts at the colony ranged up to 36 on 6 Jul (WRS). 82 reported in nearby Fremont Co. on 10 Jul (BPa, BLW) comprised a different group of birds.

**Cattle Egret:** Like the above species, Cattle Egrets finally nested in Iowa when 100+ pairs nested at Folsom L. 200+ Cattle Egrets were seen there on 6 Jul and an unknown number of the 135+ nests belonged to this species (WRS). Other reports included 11 at New Albin on 6 Jun (DK), 4 at Barringer Sl. on 15 Jun (MiB, JJD) 15 s. of Cherokee on 18 Jun (\*MMB) and, and 5 at Tomahawk M., Sac Co. on 26 June (MiB).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** The only reports were 2-4 at Deweys Pasture on 2 Jun (MiB, JJD), Jemmerson Sl. on 15 Jun (JJD), s. of Silver L. on 26 Jul (HZ), and 10 at Union Sl. on 3 Jun (THK, CJB, TJS).

**Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** All reports were from along the Mississippi or Missouri rivers. Singles were at Sny Magill Access, Clayton Co. on 29 Jun (DK), Folsom L. on 6 Jul (WRS), and Willow Sl. on 28 Jul (RKM). Others were 2 at L. Odessa on 30 Jul (GDW) and 5 at Folsom L. on 4 Jul (BPa, LPa).

**Ibis species:** The report of 2 ibis seen at Mark Twain NWR, Louisa Co. on 11 Jun



(\*WS, LH) will be referred to the Records Committee.

**Tundra Swan:** The 200 reported 29 Mar at Charles City should have been 40(JLH).

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** 1 was at the IPL Ponds on 27 Jul (BLW).

**Snow Goose:** Singles were in Mills Co. on 12 Jul and at IPL Ponds on 27 Jul (BLW); 7 were at Riverton A. on 4 Jul (SD).

**Canada Goose:** The numerous broods seen in the Great Lakes region suggested this was a successful nesting season (JJD). Broods at Saylorville Res. (Scott Rolfes fide JJD), New Albin (DK), NW Story Co. (MiB), and Anderson L. (MiB, SD, JJD) extended the nesting range of this species slightly. 12 near Maxwell, Story Co. on 15 Jun (SD) and 3 at Davenport from late Jun through Jul (PCP, MLP, CBI, LL) were out of its normal range.

**Green-winged Teal:** A male was at Rush L., Osceola Co. on 15 Jul (JJD).

**American Black Duck:** A brood below the Saylorville Dam in Jul was tended by a female Mallard and a male Black Duck although the latter had some white on the wing suggesting mixed parentage (Scott Rolfes fide JJD).

**Northern Pintail:** 2 pairs were at Union Sl. on 2 Jun (FLM, RKM, RuH) and 3 were in Mills Co. on 1 Jul (BP a, LP a).

**Northern Shoveler:** 2 pairs were at Union Sl. on 2 Jun (FLM, RKM, RuH) and 1 male was e. of Spirit L. on 15 Jun (JJD).

**Gadwall:** 2 nests were found at Union Sl. (Joe Fleskes fide JJD). A pair at Dan Green Sl. on 1 Jun (MiB, JJD), 2 males at Rush L., Osceola Co. on 15 Jun (JJD) and 5 in Fremont Co. on 10 Jul (BLW) are about typical for a summer.

**American Wigeon:** The only report was one at Spring Run A., Dickinson Co. on 2 Jun (MiB, JJD).

**Canvasback:** 3 males on the Mississippi R. near Keokuk were far out of the normal summer range (\*RCe).

**Ring-necked Duck:** 2 nests at Anderson L. in mid Jun (AT) are one of the few recent nesting records of this species. Single males were at Union Sl. on 5 Jun (MiB) and in Poweshiek Co. on 6 Jun (DK).

**Lesser Scaup:** A male was at Rush L., Osceola Co. on 15 Jun (JJD).

**Oldsquaw:** The bird at Union Sl. this spring stayed until 25 Apr (Joe Fleskes fide JJD), setting a new late date.

**Hooded Merganser:** Different broods were at Big Sand Mound Pres. on 5 Jun and 28 Jun (PCP). Another brood was at Sny Magill Access, Clayton Co. on 29 Jun (DK). Singles at Union Sl. on 2 Jun (FLM, RKM, RuH), near Larabee, Co. on 22 Jun (MMB), and near Sioux City on 15 Jun (BLW) were out of its normal range.

**Ruddy Duck:** A brood was s. of Silver L., Dickinson Co. on 23 Jul (HZ). 2 pair were at Forney L. on 21 Jun (FLM, WRS).

**Bald Eagle:** A nest in NE Iowa was successful (Margaret Anderson fide FL).

**Northern Harrier:** An adult and a fledgling at Hayden Prairie 4-9 Jun (JPS) is one of the few recent nestings of this endangered species in Iowa. A female was at Union Sl. on 2 Jun (FLM, RKM, RuH).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Birds were at their usual locations in Allamakee Co. in Jun (DK). Singles were at Big Sand Mound Pres. on 5 Jun (PCP, CBI, LL) and Roberts Park, Van Buren Co. on 12 Jul (JPSa).

**Broad-winged Hawk:** 2 pair were in Yellow River F. in Jun (DK) and 2 adults accompanied a flying immature at Ledges S.P. on 18 Jun (JJD).

**Swainson's Hawk:** All reports were either from SW or NE Iowa. Individuals or pairs were seen at 3 locales in Mills Co. 29 June-22 Jul (BP a, LP a); reports by others from that county presumably were the same birds. Singles were seen in Fremont Co. on 4 Jul (SD), near Elma, Howard Co. on 14 Jun (Wayne Schennum fide RWH), and Sweet M. on 22 Jul (FLM).

- Peregrine Falcon:** The record of 1 over Ames on 23 Jun (\*PM), if accepted, raises questions of both where it came from and where it was going.
- Gray Partridge:** Singles in Allamakee Co. on 15 Jun (DK) and near Dysart, Tama Co. on 29 Jul (FLM), and 2 n. of Grundy Center on 13 Jul (FLM) were near the edge of this species range.
- King Rail:** The only report was 1 at New Albin on 22 Jun (DK).
- Virginia Rail:** Singles were at Cooper's M. on 10 Jun (JJD) and Cone M. on 26 June (GDW); a nest was found in Dickinson Co. on 19 Jun (MiB).
- Common Moorhen:** A brood was at Cone M. on 19 Jul (GDW). 2 were at New Albin on 6 Jun (DK) and 2 at Anderson L. in mid-Jun (AT).
- American Coot:** A nest at Larson M. in Jun (JJD) and broods at Hickory Grove Park on 2 Jul (SD) and Colo Ponds on 14 Jul (HZ) and 28 Jul (SD, JJD, PM) were all in Story Co. where the species is a sporadic nester.
- Lesser Golden-Plover:** 1 at Colo Ponds on 21 Jun was a different bird than 1 seen there 2 Jun (HZ) and is the first mid-summer Iowa record; 1 there on 28 Jul (PM) was the only fall bird reported.
- Semipalmated Plover:** Singles appeared near Ames on 19 Jul (PM), in Mills Co. on 22 Jul (BP<sub>a</sub>, LP<sub>a</sub>), and at Hendrickson M. on 23 Jul (SD, EM).
- Piping Plover:** At least 4 pairs nested at the IPL Ponds (BLW), attracting numerous birders throughout the period. 3 pairs also nested along the Missouri R. near Sioux City (BLW).
- Killdeer:** 180 counted at Amana L. and Coralville Res. on 3 Jun (THK, CJB) was high for so early in the summer.
- Black-necked Stilt:** 2 that appeared at Union Sl. on 1 and 2 Jun (Joe Fleskes fide JJD, FLM, \*RKM, RuH) disappeared before many birders could see them. If the record is accepted, it will be the first for this species in Iowa.
- Greater Yellowlegs:** 1 at Colo Ponds on 3 Jul (HZ) is the earliest fall date on record. 3 at Amana L. on 14 Jul (THK, CJB) and 2 near Ames on 15 Jul (PM) were also early.
- Lesser Yellowlegs:** 1 at Colo Ponds on 18 Jun (HZ) is a record early date. 150 e. of Ames on 21 Jul (PM) were the most reported.
- Solitary Sandpiper:** 1 at Sny Magill Access, Clayton Co. on 29 Jun (DK) ties the third earliest fall date. Numerous other observers reported birds in the second half of Jul with 16 at Hendrickson M. on 23 Jul (SD) the most reported.
- Willet:** 1 n. of Snake Creek M. on 3 Jun (THK, CJB, TJS) is the latest spring date on record while 6 at Peterson Pits, Story Co. on 9 Jul (SDL, HZ) were the only southbound birds reported.
- Spotted Sandpiper:** There were only 4 reports with 6 at Amana L. and Coralville Res. on 29 Jul (THK, CJB, TJS, RJH) the most reported.
- Upland Sandpiper:** There were 14 reports from 12 counties in all corners of the state; 23 in a 30 acre clover field near Lamoni on 16 Jul (JDG, JL) was by far the most.
- Whimbrel:** 1 at Hendrickson M. on 12-13 May was seen by PM rather than MMB as previously reported.
- Hudsonian Godwit:** 2 at Colo Ponds (HZ) and singles n. of Snake Creek M. and at Union Sl. (THK, CJB, TJS) on 3 Jun all tie the second latest spring date.
- Sanderling:** 4 at Union Sl on 2 Jun (FLM, RKM, RuH) tie the second latest spring date.
- Semipalmated Sandpiper:** 15 at Colo Ponds on 11 Jul (PM) tie the second earliest fall date; 1 e. of Ames on 12 Jul and 4 at Amana and Coralville Res. on 14 Jul (THK, CJB) were also early.
- Western Sandpiper:** The only report was 1 in Fremont Co. on 26 Jul (TB, BP<sub>a</sub>).
- Least Sandpiper:** 5 n. of Waterloo on 3 Jun (FLM) ties the latest spring date; the first fall bird was at Colo Ponds on 11 Jul (PM).



- White-rumped Sandpiper:** The only reports were late spring birds at Union Sl. on 2-3 Jun (FLM, RKM, RuH, THK, CJB, TJS).
- Baird's Sandpiper:** 5 ne of Cherokee on 17 Jul (MMB) tie the second earliest fall date; others were in Mills Co. on 22 Jul (BP a, LP a) and Fremont Co. on 26 Jul (BP a, TB).
- Pectoral Sandpiper:** 3 at Colo Ponds on 3 Jun (HZ) is the third latest spring date; 2 in Mills Co. on 4 Jul (TB, BJR) are the second earliest fall date.
- Stilt Sandpiper:** 1 at Union Sl. on 3 Jun (THK, CJB, TJS) is the second latest spring date and 2 at the IPL Ponds and 9 in Fremont Co. on 10 Jul (BP a, BLW) tie the third earliest fall date. Most shorebirders reported this species.
- Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** 2 in Fremont Co. on 26 Jul (BL a, \*TB) are the second earliest date and the only reported this summer.
- Short-billed Dowitcher:** 1 at Colo Ponds on 9 Jul (HZ) is the second earliest date; 9 were at Amana L. on 14 Jul (THK, CJB).
- Common Snipe:** 1 at Larson M., Story Co. on 22 Jul (PM) is the third earliest fall date.
- American Woodcock:** A brood of 4 was at Effigy Mounds N.M. on 22 Jun (DK).
- Wilson's Phalarope:** 3 adults and a nest with 3 eggs at New Albin on 6 Jun (DK) confirms nesting for that corner of Iowa; singles at Colo Ponds on 7 Jul (HZ) and Amana L. on 14 Jul (THK, CJB) are the earliest and second earliest fall dates.
- Red-necked Phalarope:** 1 s. of Ames on 3 Jun (SD) is a record late spring date.
- Franklin's Gull:** There were several reports from the Great Lakes region with 65 s. of Lake Park on 24 Jul (HZ) the most.
- Ring-billed Gull:** Again there were reports from the Great Lakes region and along the Mississippi R. with 180 e. of Arnolds Park on 25 Jul (HZ) the most.
- Caspian Tern:** The only reports were singles ne. of Oakville on 27 Jun (PCP) and one at IPL Ponds on 29 Jun (BLW).
- Common Tern:** 1 with dark primaries was at Union Sl. on 2 Jun (FLM, RKM, RuH).
- Forester's Tern:** Singles or small groups were widely reported; a maximum of 6 on 15 Jun (compared to more than 30 last year) was seen at Jemmerson Sl. where they have nested in recent years (JJD).
- Least Tern:** Other than 1 at Forney L. on 19 Jun (BPr, MPr, PH) all reports were from the IPL Ponds where up to 10 pairs nested (BLW) for the first Iowa nesting in about 10 years.
- Black Tern:** Small groups were widely reported but the only hint of nesting reported was 2 pairs at Spring Run A., Dickinson Co. on 2 Jun (MiB, JJD).
- Common Barn-Owl:** 1 was w. of State Center 26-28 Jul (BPr, MPr, SD, JJD, RKM).
- Chuck-will's-widow:** Up to 3 were heard near Waubonsie S.P. 18-21 Jun (RKM, BPr, MPr, PH, FLM, WRS) and 1 was at Nine Eagles S.P. on 8 Jun (DK).
- Whip-poor-will:** 1 summered at Wilson's farm in Mills Co. where this species is rare (BLW).
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Several observers reported singles in SE on SW Iowa and Koenig gave county totals for the period, the maximum being 4 in Allamakee Co. We have few data to tell us anything about the population trends for this species.
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Singles were at Pikes Peak, Clayton Co. on 16 Jun (DK) and George Wyth S.P. on 8 Jul (RKM, FLM); in addition Koenig found 2 nests with young in Allamakee Co. on 22 Jun and another with young in Winneshiek Co. on 17 Jun.
- Pileated Woodpecker:** 1 was at Sand Creek W.A., Decatur Co. on 3 Jun (RWH) and 6 were found on about half of 1,670 acre Huron I. near Oakville on 21 Jun (PCP).

**Acadian Flycatcher:** Birds were reported from throughout E. Iowa; Koenig's county totals for the period included 21 in Allamakee and 10 in Dubuque counties.

**Alder Flycatcher:** Singles at Shimek F. on 2 Jun (RCe), Amana Woods on 3 Jun (BPr, MPr), and Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 3 Jun (DK) and 16 Jun (JPSa) were the only reports.

**Least Flycatcher:** 1-2 were reported from Allamakee, Winneshiek, and Clayton counties (DK) and 1 was at Davenport on 18 Jul (PCP).

**Western Kingbird:** Despite all the birders who visied W Iowa this summer, the only reports were 2 e. of Akron on 18 Jun (BPr, MPr, PH), 3 in Fremont Co. on 18 Jun (RKM), and 2 in SW Iowa durin the period (BLW).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** 1 was at Wilson's farm, Mills Co. on 22 Jun (BLW) and another was at Lewis and Clark S.P. on 21 Jul (\*TB). The date for this spring's bird in Wayne Co. should be 2 May rather than 4 May (\*RJ).

**Purple Martin:** Mosman's total of about 200 fledged by 61 pairs near Elkhart is about average (DDM); flocks along the riverfront in Keokuk reached 1,150 by 12 Jul (RCe).

**Tree Swallow:** Birds at Big Sand Mound Pres. nested in Wood Duck boxes (PCP) while at Deweys Pasture they readily used boxes built specifically for swallows (JJD).

**Brown Creeper:** The only report was a bird acting territorial on Huron I. near Oakville on 21 Jun (PCP).

**Carolina Wren:** None reported.

**Bewick's Wren:** None reported.

**Winter Wren:** 1 at Waneta Point, Clinton Co. on 16 Jun (FL) was the only report.

**Sedge Wren:** They were very abundant in Hayden Prairie 3-9 Jun (JPS).

**Marsh Wren:** 2 nests were found at Cooper M., Story Co. on 29 Jun (EM).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** 2 nests were found in Shimek F. on 14-15 Jun (RCe) and fledglings were seen s. of Elkader on 23 Jul (PCP). Both Cecil and Moore commented on seeing large numbers in Shimek F.

**Eastern Bluebird:** Mosman said production in his nest boxes was down 20% and Brewer thought nest success was lower than usual.

**Veery:** Singles were reported in Jun in Poweshiek (DK), Iowa (BPr, MPr), Linn (BPr, MPr), Van Buren (DK), and Dubuque (FL) counties. Koenig reported 2 in Yellow River F. on 15 Jun and 9 in Dubuque Co. on 29 Jun.

**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** 1 in Ames on 2 Jun (PM) ties the latest spring date.

**Swainson's Thrush:** 1 in Davenport on 11, 13 and 21 Jul (PCP, MLP) is unprecedented in Iowa.

**Wood Thrush:** 1 in Lewis and Clark S.P. on 21 Jun (TB) is west of its usual Iowa range.

**Northern Mockingbird:** All reports were s. of Interstate 80 with 6 of 10 in SW Iowa. A nest with young was found nw. of Sidney on 10 Jun (BP, LPA), and an immature was found in NW Fremont Co. on 21 Jun (FLM, WRS).

**Cedar Waxwing:** An adult was feeding a fledgling Brown-headed Cowbird and another was feeding a young waxwing on 21 Jun in Lewis and Clark S.P. (TB). Another nest was similarly parasitized at L. Anita S.P. in Jun (RCH).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** The 7 reports were scattered around Iowa with 2 adults and 2 juveniles in SW Cherokee Co. on 5 Jul (MMB) and 1 e. of Waucoma, Fayette Co. on 14 Jun (CAB, RPB) the most out-of-range.

**White-eyed Vireo:** Reports were from Van Buren, Lee, Muscatine, and Allamakee counties.

**Bell's Vireo:** Most reports were from SW Iowa including 30+ on 21 Jun (FLM, RKM); Koenig found 7 in Mahaska Co. on 4 Jul.



- Yellow-throated Vireo:** 1 at Waubonsie S.P. on 20 Jun (BPr, MPr, PH) and 7 in Fremont and Mills counties on 21 Jun (FLM) were away from its main Iowa range.
- Red-eyed Vireo:** Koenig recorded 130 for the period.
- Blue-winged Warbler:** Mostly singles were reported in Van Buren (BPr, MPr, DK, RCe, FLM), Lee (BPr, MPr, RCe, FLM), Lucas (RWH), Boone (SD, JDD), Fayette (FLM), Clayton (DK), Winneshiek (DK), and Allamakee (DK) counties. 15+ were reported from Shimek F. and Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 23 Jun (FLM, RCe).
- Northern Parula:** The 8 reports were mainly from SE Iowa except singles at Waubonsie S.P. on 10 and 21 Jun (BP<sub>a</sub>, LP<sub>a</sub>, FLM, WRS). 6 males at Ledges S.P. on 30 Jun (SD, JJD) and 12 in Shimek F. and Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 23 June (FLM, RCe) suggest the species is more common in Iowa than previously thought.
- Yellow Warbler:** About 20 at Cone M on 5 Jun (RCe), 34 near Marquette on 7 Jun (DK), 16 at Yellow River F. on 22 Jun (DK) and numerous nests at Trumbull L. in early Jun (JJD) suggest good numbers nest in Iowa.
- Chestnut-sided Warbler:** Singles at Yellow River F. on 6 Jun (DK), sw. of Waterloo on 16 Jun (\*FLM), and at Volga River A. on 24 Jun (RKM) were more than usually are reported in summer.
- Yellow-throated Warbler:** The only reports were singles at Ledges S.P. (SD, JJD) and Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. (FLM).
- Cerulean Warbler:** 1-3 were reported in Lee (RCe), Van Buren (FLM, RCe, DK), Boone (SD, JJD), Fayette (DK), Dubuque (DK), Clayton (DK) Muscatine (CP) and Winneshiek (DK) counties. Koenig also had 15 in Allamakee Co.
- Black-and-white Warbler:** Singles in Ames on 2 Jun (PM) and near Redding, Ringgold Co. on 6 Jun (JL), and 2 at Volga River A. on 3 Jun (FLM) were probably late migrants. 2 males at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 23 Jun (FLM, RCe) are more suggestive of nesting.
- American Redstart:** 15 were at Yellow River F. on 22 Jun (DK).
- Prothonotary Warbler:** 2 at Prairie L., Dickinson Co. on 26 Jul (HZ) were far out-of-range. Petersen noted that 2 of 9 warbler nest boxes at Big Sand Mound Pres. were used this year.
- Worm-eating Warbler:** 1 was at Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 23 Jun (FLM) and 1-5 were seen in Shimek F. from 7-21 Jul (RCe). A bird there on 15 and 21 Jul appeared to be an immature (shorter tail) and in any case sets a third latest date.
- Ovenbird:** Koenig reported 22 in Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. on 1 Jun, 20 in Shimek F. on 2 Jun, and 34 in Yellow River F. on 15 Jun.
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** Small numbers were found in the usual locations.
- Kentucky Warbler:** Numerous birders found small numbers in eastern Iowa and at Waubonsie S.P.; Koenig found 25 in Allamakee, 15 in Lee, and 12 in Van Buren counties during the period.
- Mourning Warbler:** 1 at Montezuma on 13 Jun (DK) is the third latest spring date.
- Hooded Warbler:** None reported.
- Canada Warbler:** 1 at Yellow River F. on 22 Jun (DK) and 2 in Dubuque Co. on 29 Jun (DK) further the possibility of nesting in Iowa.
- Yellow-breasted Chat:** 9 reports were from usual locations in southern Iowa while singles at Yellow River F. on 15 Jun (DK) and s. of Nevada 7-18 Jul (PM, HZ, SD) were somewhat out-of-range.
- Summer Tanager:** All reports were from the southern row of counties: Van Buren Co. on 3 Jun (DK) and 12 Jul (JPS<sub>a</sub>), Nine Eagles S.P. 3-9 Jun (RWH). Slip Bluff Park on 14 Jul (FLM), and Waubonsie S.P. on 18 Jun (RKM).

- Western Tanager:** A late reported male was seen near Sabula along the Mississippi R. on 23 May (\*LGJ).
- Blue Grosbeak:** There were several reports of 1-3 birds in SW Iowa with the most being 7 near Forney L. on 19 Jun (BPr, MPr, PH). 1 was also seen in Shimek F. in SE Iowa on 30 Jun (\*RCe) and 2 were in Cherokee Co. on 11 Jun (MMB).
- Dickcissel:** Bray, Brewer, and Wilson all thought numbers were up in their areas in western Iowa.
- Clay-colored Sparrow:** Singles at Volga River A. on 3 Jun (FLM) and 24 Jun (RKM) and n. of Estherville on 19-20 Jun (\*DE) suggest that this species might nest in Iowa.
- Lark Sparrow:** There were scattered reports with 10 at Big Sand Mound Pres. on 19 Jun (PCP) the most.
- Henslow's Sparrow:** Schaufenbuel was unable to find any in an intensive study of Hayden Prairie in early Jun.
- White-throated Sparrow:** 1 seen 3 miles w. of Estherville on 20 Jul (\*DE) is the first summer record for Iowa.
- Yellow-headed Blackbird:** Nesting colonies were found in flooded cropland in Story Co. (JJD) and at sewage lagoons at Saylorville Res. (Scott Rolfes fide JJD).
- Great-tailed Grackle:** The nesting pair at Finn Pond, Greene Co. was last seen on 3 Jun (THK, CJB, TJS). Another pair was at the IPL Ponds on 21 Jun (\*FLM, WRS).
- Common Grackle:** Flocks of 200 were noted as early as 11 Jul in Keokuk (RCe).
- Orchard Oriole:** Small numbers were noted in Clinton, Mahaska, Poweshiek, Jasper, Decatur, Ringgold, Story, and Dickinson counties. A female and 2 young were seen in Muscatine Co. (PCP, BBl, CBl, LL). 2 nests in Cass Co. were parasitized by cowbirds (RCH).
- Pine Siskin:** The only records were singles in Ames on 4 Jun (HZ) and 27 Jun (EM) and at Davenport through 9 Jun at Fremont Cemetery (Gary Inhelder fide PCP).

#### CONTRIBUTORS

\* — documentation only)

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## COMMENT

As is always the case, this report depends on information from observers throughout Iowa. I received reports from 35 observers as well as information from 15 other observers. Six more submitted documentations only and there were 4 "fide" reports. This is about the same as last year and good considering the switch in seasonal editors. Both Bob Howe and Craig Hensley are leaving Iowa and this is probably their last report. I thank all observers for their contributions. I especially welcomed the information provided on nesting species. Hopefully that will grow as the atlas project starts next year. I was also glad to see the greater interest in woodland species such as warblers and vireos this year. Sixteen species of warblers were mentioned including several for which we have no nest records or no recent nesting records for Iowa. Maybe that will change next year. Send fall season reports (Aug. 1 - Nov. 30) by Dec. 1 to Mike Newlon, 408 Wales St., Iowa City, IA. 52240.

## Book Reviews

**A Bird Finding Guide to Canada** — J.C. Findlay — Hurtig Publishers Ltd., Edmonton — 387 p., 12 maps, 40 b & w illus. — 1984 — cloth, \$27.95, paperbound, \$18.95.

Finally there is a complete and reasonably comprehensive bird finding guide for Canada. The author covers 200 specific areas in reasonable detail including both a general description with good directions for reaching the location and birding features. Many Canadian birders contributed and areas visited by this reviewer were adequately described. The Churchill account makes no mention of the new Lane-Chartier birders' guide, probably because this section was written prior to its publication. This book is full of references to park lists and should be useful to anyone planning a visit to Canada. ed.

**Wood Warblers' World** — Hal H. Harrison — Simon & Schuster, NY — 336 p., 55 color & 217 b & w photos, 53 maps — 1984 — \$19.95.

It has been twenty-seven years since a book has been published on wood warblers. Harrison has studied these birds for over thirty years and obtained some excellent photographs in the course of his studies. Almost all of the 53 species which have bred in the U.S. are depicted in photographs. The text covers habitat, breeding range, nests and eggs, song, breeding and nesting, behavior, rarity and some personal accounts of the author and other students of warbler behavior. It is not a very technical approach but references some of the detailed studies of individual species. The book probably has more appeal to the casual birder and semi-serious student rather than the hard core birder and scientist. ed.

**Birding with a Purpose** — Frances Hamerstrom — ISU Press, Ames — 130 p., 16 b & w photos — 1984 — \$13.95.

Dr. Hamerstrom, an Iowa State graduate, has written many technical articles on her research but this book reveals the "fun" aspects of her work. The book's subtitle is "Of Raptors, Gabboons and other Creatures." Having met several gabboons, I can support the author's point that these chaps are not always sane. Many birders will recall similar incidents from their own experience. It is most enjoyable light reading. ed.

**Population Ecology of the Bobwhite** — John L. Roseberry & W.D. Klimstra — Southern Ill. Univ. Press, Carbondale — 259 pp, 24 b & w photos — 1984 — \$25.00.

In the late 1940s Klimstra worked on the Bobwhite in Davis County, Iowa. This laid the groundwork for the southern Illinois studies which were carried out primarily on a 627 hectare site just northwest of Crab Orchard Lake. The thirty year study investigated the habitat needs & utilization, fall and winter losses, recruitment, population variation and regulation as well as exploitation of the birds. Over 75,000 man-hours of research went into this vast study which also covered other areas within the 34 counties of southern Illinois. The result is a fine

overview of all facets of the population ecology of this native game bird. Although the climate is a bit more mild the application to Iowa, especially southern Iowa, is considerable. ed.

**How Birds Work — A Guide to Bird Biology** — Ron Freetley — Blandford Press, Dist. by Sterling Publ. Co., NY — 232 p. 14 color photos — 1984 — paper-bound — \$8.95.

Many titles are on the market relating bird biology for the beginning bird student. This one is well done but approaches the subject from a British perspective. The author covers evolution, classification, anatomy, flight, reproductive cycle, migration, behavior, distribution and relation with man. It avoids being too technical and treats the subject evenly. ed.

**Private Lives of Garden Birds** — Calvin Simonds — Rodale Press, Emmans, PA — 175 p., 11 b & w ill. — 1984 — \$14.95.

The book will probably be of interest to many back yard birders. The author describes the behavior pattern of ten common birds usually seen around backyards. He explains the calls and songs of these birds and relates them to life cycle events. The book will provide the meaning of many of the sometimes baffling actions for these species. ed.

**Ecological Communities — Conceptual Issues and the Evidence** — D.R. Strong, D. Simberloff, L. G. Abele, & A. B. Thistel, eds. — Princeton Univ. Press — 613 pp. — 1984 — Cloth, \$60.00, paper, \$22.50.

Interspecific competition serves to limit populations of various forms within an ecological community. Different species have different foods, behavior and responses to weather, seasons, and pulses of resources. These lead to independent population dynamics. The degree to which these differences uncouple species within ecological communities and attenuate the effects of interaction is a dominant question of community ecology. This book brings together 28 presentations relating to these concepts. ed.

#### STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

Title of Publication: **IOWA BIRD LIFE**

Publication No. 0021045

Date of Filing: Sep. 28, 1984

Frequency of Issue: Quarterly

No. of Issues Published Annually: four (4)

Annual Subscription Price: \$12.00

Location of Known Office of Publication and Headquarters: 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Scott Co., Iowa 52803

Name and Address of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Peter C. Petersen, 235 McClellan Blvd., Davenport, Iowa 52803

Owner: Iowa Ornithologists' Union, 715 West, Colo, Iowa 50056

Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, etc. — None

Average No. Copies Each Issue During  
Preceding 12 Months

Nearest  
Single Issue

A. Total No. Copies Printed (Net Press Run) .....	550	600
B. Paid Circulation — Mail Subscriptions .....	490	550
C. Total Paid Circulation .....	490	550
D. Free Distribution by Mail, Carrier or Other Means, Samples Complimentary, and Other Free Copies .....	0	0
Total Distribution .....	490	550
F. Copies not Distributed — Office use, Left Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled after Printing .....	60	50
G. Total (Sum of E & F — should equal net press run) .....	550	600

Peter C. Petersen, Editor

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